

health care. This is going to cost 1.6 million jobs by 2013.

Then I got an e-mail from a friend in Dubois, WY, who says that if this bill passes, he knows he is going to lay off workers—quite to the contrary of what my colleague from Montana says when he says it is going to help keep people working.

At a time when the country is experiencing 10 percent unemployment, at a time when the people's No. 1 concern is jobs and the economy of this country, we are now embarking on an additional spending spree when our national debt is at the highest levels ever.

I disagree with my colleague from Montana. I think, contrary to what he suggested—he said: I am not just blowing smoke—I believe we will lose jobs if this passes.

Mr. BAUCUS. Will the Senator yield for one brief minute?

Mr. BARRASSO. When I am finished with our comments on this side.

Mr. BAUCUS. I thank the Senator.

Mr. BARRASSO. I also heard the majority whip come to the floor and say the Republicans have only offered four amendments. I offered 19 amendments. So I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up my amendment No. 3148 to protect individuals facing skyrocketing premiums.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. Reserving the right to object.

Mr. BARRASSO. The purpose of this amendment is—

Mr. BAUCUS. Reserving the right to object, and I will object, we have been—

Mr. BARRASSO. Regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request?

Mr. BAUCUS. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. So we have a 383-page amendment brought to the floor, read on the floor yesterday. I worked my way through it, along with my staff—383 pages. And the majority whip comes to the floor and says the Republicans have not offered amendments. I just tried to offer one, unsuccessfully, and it has been objected to.

So I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up amendment No. 3153 to protect young, healthy persons from increased insurance premiums.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, clearly this is a stunt. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending—and these are—I just heard the comments—these are amendments that are aimed to keep the President's words that we will get insurance premiums

under control, people will notice their premiums go down, that we will make it better for people, easier for people. The Democrats ought to accept all these amendments because they are intended to do just that.

I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up amendment No. 3146. This amendment deals with individual mandate penalties and creates personal accounts for young people who are penalized and they have to pay a fee and a fine if they do not obey the individual mandate, and that would go into an account for them so they could use that money to buy their own health insurance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. Reserving the right to object, this is the fourth time today Senators on the other side—

Mr. BARRASSO. Regular order.

Mr. COBURN. Regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I understand this is going to improve Medicare. I heard the chairman of the Finance Committee say this is going to make Medicare stronger. I believe Medicare patients ought to have the freedom to contract and the right to privately contract for medical services with the physician of their choice.

If, as the chairman of the Finance Committee has now recommended in his statement, it doesn't work out the way it is suggested—I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and I be allowed to call up amendment No. 2984, Medicare patient freedom to contract.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. For the fifth time, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, that is why I am not surprised when I read polls that say negatives abound in polls about this bill, written in secret, brought to us just a little over 24 hours ago with a 383-page amendment, one that is now not going to be allowed to have any amendments offered.

I just offered four different amendments aimed to strengthen the health care system of the country. Each time, the chairman of the Finance Committee is not even interested in hearing what the amendments are about.

The people of Wyoming say: Don't cut my Medicare, don't raise my taxes, don't make things worse for me, especially in these economic times. This is a bill that is going to cut people's Medicare by \$500 billion, it is going to raise their taxes, and it is going to make things worse for the people of Wyoming and this country. That is why the front page of a local newspaper has a story, "Doctor Shortage Will Worsen." Great concerns.

Even the Actuary of Medicare and Medicaid says that if all of this goes through—and this is before we had the 383 new pages—if all of this goes through, one in five hospitals is going to have significant problems within the next 10 years and one in five doctors' offices may have to close. That is why this health bill is scary.

For anyone who has not had an opportunity to read Dr. COBURN's, Senator COBURN's article in the Wall Street Journal, an editorial, Thursday, December 17, I recommend the editorial to them. It is titled "The Health Bill Is Scary."

I ask unanimous consent to have this editorial printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal]

THE HEALTH BILL IS SCARY

(By Tom Coburn)

I recently suggested that seniors will die sooner if Congress actually implements the Medicare cuts in the healthcare bill put forward by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. My colleagues who defend the bill—none of whom have practiced medicine—predictably dismissed my concern as a scare tactic. They are wrong. Every American, not just seniors, should know that the rationing provisions in the Reid bill will not only reduce their quality of life, but their life spans as well.

My 25 years as a practicing physician have shown me what happens when government attempts to practice medicine: Doctors respond to government coercion instead of patient cues, and patients die prematurely. Even if the public option is eliminated from the bill, these onerous rationing provisions will remain intact.

For instance, the Reid bill (in sections 3403 and 2021) explicitly empowers Medicare to deny treatment based on cost. An Independent Medicare Advisory Board created by the bill—composed of permanent, unelected and, therefore, unaccountable members—will greatly expand the rationing practices that already occur in the program. Medicare, for example, has limited cancer patients' access to Epogen, a costly but vital drug that stimulates red blood cell production. It has limited the use of virtual, and safer, colonoscopies due to cost concerns. And Medicare refuses medical claims at twice the rate of the largest private insurers.

Section 6301 of the Reid bill creates new comparative effectiveness research (CER) programs. CER panels have been used as rationing commissions in other countries such as the U.K., where 15,000 cancer patients die prematurely every year according to the National Cancer Intelligence Network. CER panels here could effectively dictate coverage options and ration care for plans that participate in the state insurance exchanges created by the bill.

Additionally, the Reid bill depends on the recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force in no fewer than 14 places. This task force was responsible for advising women under 50 to not undergo annual mammograms. The administration claims the task force recommendations do not carry the force of law, but the Reid bill itself contradicts them in section 2713. The bill explicitly states, on page 17, that health insurance plans "shall provide coverage for" services approved by the task force. This chilling provision represents the government stepping between doctors and patients. When the government asserts the power to provide care, it also asserts the power to deny care.